

Food Stamp Program - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Q. What are food stamps?

A. Food stamps are benefits placed on a client's EBT card, which is used like money to buy food.

Q. Why do you need food stamps?

A. Food stamps are a way to get through tough times. They help you get back on your feet. Food stamps are a bridge to better times.

Q. What is Emergency Service?

A. Emergency service is a special application processing method designed to provide benefits to a food stamp unit within seven calendar days from the date of application. Non-emergency service food stamp applications are processed within 30 days.

Q. Who can get food stamps?

A. You can get food stamps if:

- You are a U.S. citizen;
- You are a qualified alien who is admitted lawfully into the U.S.;
- You have no or low income;
- You are on public assistance;
- You are retired;
- You are disabled; or
- You are homeless;

AND:

- You are not trying to avoid a felony prosecution;
- You are not fleeing from law enforcement;
- You are not trying to avoid jail after conviction of a felony; and
- You are not in violation of the conditions of probation or parole.

Q. How do you get food stamps?

A. You fill out an application at your local Department of Social Services agency. If you are sick and can't come in, you can call the office and apply over the phone or have an authorized representative come in and apply for you.

Q. What's the application like?

A. It asks:

- Where do you live?
- How much money do you earn?
- How much money do you have in the bank?
- Do you have a car?
- Who lives with you?
- What other money do you get?
- What bills do you have to pay every month?

To fill out your application you will need to have:

- Social Security numbers for everyone in your home who has one
- ID which shows your name and address (driver's license or mail)
- Bills showing how much you pay for rent, mortgage, gas, lights, water, telephone
- Proof of the money you get every month (pay stubs from your job, Social Security, public assistance, child support)
- Proof of the money you have in the bank (bank statement)
- Proof of what you pay someone to keep your children while you work

Your caseworker can help you get this information.

Q. What can you buy with food stamps?

A: You can buy:

- Milk and other dairy products
- Meat, fish, and poultry
- Cereals and ingredients used for baking
- Vegetables and fruit
- Cold deli items, such as sandwiches and salads which are intended to be eaten at home
- Ice and water for human consumption
- Specialty food such as dietetic and diabetic foods, infant formulas and "health food" items
- Garden seeds and plants for growing at home
- Pectin used in canning
- Hot prepared meals served by restaurants and non-profit agencies authorized by USDA to accept food stamps

Q. What will your food stamps not buy?

A. You cannot buy:

- Non-food items
- Alcoholic beverages
- Tobacco and tobacco products such as cigars, cigarettes, snuff, and chewing tobacco
- Drug store medication such as aspirin, antacids, and cough drops
- Food preservation equipment such as canning jars and freezer containers
- Foods not intended to be eaten by people such as dog and cat food, bird seed
- Vitamins and minerals in tablet, capsule, powder, or liquid form

Food which is to be heated in the store